

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 EB-08 CU-04 SIL-01
LAB-04 COME-00 /089 W
-----013319 162141Z /72

R 161311Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2083
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HELSINKI 2679

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FI, UR
SUBJECT: KEKKONEN PRESENCE AT SOVIET ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS UNDER-
SCORED INTENSIVE PERIOD OF FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ACTIVITIES

1. SUMMARY: FINNISH-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ACTIVITIES ARE ALWAYS
HELD DURING THE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ANNIVERSARY SEASON. THIS
YEAR, OBSERVANCES HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY INTENSIVE, AS HAD
BEEN EXPECTED, AND ARE COVERING A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.
FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTS AND POLITICAL LEADERS ARE
CONVINCED THAT INTENSIVE FINNISH AVOWALS OF FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS
THE USSR ARE NECESSARY TO RETAIN THE GOOD WILL OF SOVIET
LEADERSHIP. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S PRESENCE IN MOSCOW DURING
THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 7 MARKED THE FIRST PEAK OF THIS YEAR'S
CELEBRATIONS. THE SECOND WILL OCCUR ON THE FINNISH 60TH
ANNIVERSARY ON DECEMBER 6. THE ROLE OF LENIN IN FINLAND'S
GAINING OF INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN GIVEN UNPRECEDENTED EMPHASIS
IN THIS YEAR'S OBSERVANCES, SPARKING SPECULATION
CONCERNING WHY. SPECIAL CELEBRATION PERIODS SUCH AS
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THE PRESENT INEVITABLY RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RISK
INHERENT IN APPEARING TO REWRITE HISTORY. WHILE SOME
FINNS AGREE THAT FRIENDSHIP CELEBRATIONS AND STATEMENTS
MAY HAVE GONE FARTHER THAN NECESSARY THIS YEAR, THEY
URGE OBSERVERS NOT TO BE MISLED BY RHETORIC. PRESUM-
ABLY THE THIRD AND LAST PEAK OF THIS ROUND OF SPECIAL
OBSERVANCES WILL OCCUR IN APRIL, 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF

THE FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP, COMMERCE AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE TREATY. END SUMMARY.

2. CELEBRATIONS OF THE ANNIVERSARIES OF THE SOVIET OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND FINNISH INDEPENDENCE, WHICH TAKE PLACE ON NOVEMBER 7 AND DECEMBER 6, RESPECTIVELY, HAVE ALWAYS PROVIDED CONVENIENT OCCASIONS FOR FINLAND AND THE SOVIET UNION EACH FOR THEIR OWN REASONS TO EMPHASIZE THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL TIES AND TO LAUD POST-WORLD WAR II COOPERATION AND GOOD NEIGHBORLINESS. OVER THE YEARS IT HAS BECOME THE CUSTOM TO VIEW THE TWO ANNIVERSARIES AS THE EFFECTIVE STARTING AND ENDING POINTS OF THE OBSERVANCE OF A FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP MONTH. THE FRIENDSHIP MONTH IS OBSERVED ANNUALLY IN ALL KINDS OF WAYS AND FORA: BY JOINT CELEBRATIONS BETWEEN YOUTH, WOMEN, LABOR, AND SPORTS GROUPS, AND BETWEEN FINNISH POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE CPSU; BY SPECIAL CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS; BY EXCHANGES OF VISITS BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND FINLAND BY A VARIETY OF GROUPS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS; AND BY COMMEMORATIVE ARTICLES AND TV PRESENTATION. (CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF MAJOR EVENTS BEING SUBMITTED BY AIRGRAM.)

3. WE EXPECTED THAT THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS WOULD RESULT IN A PARTICULARLY INTENSIVE PROGRAM OF FINNISH/SOVIET CELEBRATIONS. A YEAR AGO SOVIET CONFIDENTIAL

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AMBASSADOR TO FINLAND V.S. STEPANOV CALLED FOR AN OFFICIAL JOINT CELEBRATION OF THE TWO ANNIVERSARIES. THE SUGGESTION WAS POLITELY BUT FIRMLY TURNED ASIDE BY THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT, WHICH WENT ON TO SELECT AS THE SLOGAN OF FINLAND'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR QUOTE AN INDEPENDENT FINLAND--OUR COMMON CAUSE END QUOTE. ALTHOUGH FINLAND AVOIDED HAVING OFFICIAL JOINT CELEBRATIONS THE EXPECTATION THAT THERE WOULD BE AN ESPECIALLY HEAVY SCHEDULE OF FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ACTIVITY THIS YEAR IS IN FACT BEING FULLY REALIZED.

4. BEGINNING AUGUST 14TH WITH THE CELEBRATION OF THE FINNISH/SOVIET YOUTH FRIENDSHIP FESTIVAL IN LAHTI, FINLAND, THERE WAS A CRESCENDO OF CELEBRATIONS OF ALL KINDS, REACHING ITS PEAK WITH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION. THE PRESENCE OF PRESIDENT KEKKONEN IN THE SOVIET UNION FOR THE CELEBRATIONS--THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS HE WAS THE ONLY CHIEF-OF-STATE FROM A NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRY TO PARTICIPATE--UNDERSCORED THE IMPORTANCE ATTRIBUTED BY FINLAND TO THE OCCASION. KEKKONEN'S PARTICIPATION WAS SYMBOLIC OF THE HEAVY

FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ACTIVITY THAT HAS BEEN OCCURRING THIS YEAR. BOTH THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF FINLAND AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP) SENT FORMAL DELEGATIONS TO MOSCOW. PRIME MINISTER KALEVI SORSA, WHO CHAIRED THE SDP DELEGATION TO MOSCOW, HURRIED BACK TO FINLAND NOVEMBER 4 TO ASSUME THE ROLE OF ACTING PRESIDENT SO THAT KEKKONEN COULD DEPART FOR MOSCOW. (KEKKONEN HAD ALSO GONE TO MOSCOW IN 1967 FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION.)

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5. AFTER A RESPITE, AND ALMOST A RETURN TO NORMAL, A SECOND CRESCENDO WILL REACH ITS PEAK ON DECEMBER 5-6 WHEN A HIGH-LEVEL SOVIET OFFICIAL, PERHAPS VICE PRESIDENT KUZNETSOV, IS EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FINNISH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS. COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES WILL, HOWEVER, CONTINUE UNTIL DECEMBER 31, THE ANNIVERSARY OF LENIN'S SIGNING OF THE DECREE RECOGNIZING FINNISH INDEPENDENCE.

6. THE COMMON THEME RUNNING THROUGH MUCH OF THE FINNISH/SOVIET FRIENDSHIP RHETORIC THIS YEAR IS THE ROLE OF LENIN IN FINLAND'S ACHIEVING OF INDEPENDENCE. AT AN OCTOBER 26 FINNISH/SOVIET SOCIETY CELEBRATION IN HELSINKI OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION,

PRESIDENT KEKKONEN STATED THAT "LENIN HAS EARNED THE UNDIVIDED RESPECT OF THE FINNISH PEOPLE AND A PERMANENT PLACE IN FINNISH HISTORY" BY HIS ACT OF RECOGNIZING FINNISH INDEPENDENCE. KEKKONEN SAID "THE
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ONLY PARTY WHICH CONSISTENTLY AND WITHOUT RESERVATION WAS PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE FINLAND'S RIGHT TO SECEDE" WAS LENIN'S BOLSHEVIK PARTY. KEKKONEN CRITICIZED IN HIS SPEECH A PERSISTENT RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF SOME FINNS TO ACKNOWLEDGE LENIN'S ROLE.

7. COMMENT: THE CURRENT PLETHORA OF FINNISH/SOVIET CELEBRATIONS IS NEITHER UNEXPECTED NOR UNPRECEDENTED. WHILE THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AND INTENSITY THIS YEAR IS MUCH HIGHER THAN IN RECENT YEARS, THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED LARGELY TO THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT 60TH ANNIVERSARIES HAVE IN FINLAND. MOST OBSERVERS STATE FLATLY, HOWEVER, THAT THE EMPHASIS GIVEN THIS YEAR BY PRESIDENT KEKKONEN AND OTHER NATIONAL LEADERS TO THE ROLE OF LENIN IN FINLAND'S INDEPENDENCE IS UNPRECEDENTED. IN ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN THE PRESIDENT'S LAUDING OF LENIN, SOME OBSERVERS SPECULATE THAT HIS UNDERLYING PURPOSE IS TO GIVE AN IMPLICIT WARNING TO CURRENT AND FUTURE SOVIET LEADERSHIP THAT WHAT LENIN HAS RECOGNIZED, LET NO SOVIET GOVERNMENT TAKE AWAY.

8. THE EMBASSY IS MORE INCLINED TO VIEW THE CURRENT TREATMENT OF LENIN AS BEING CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE OF THE LOVE FEASTS THAT FINLAND HAS WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON THESE SPECIAL OCCASIONS. MOST FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTS AND POLITICAL LEADERS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT ARE CONVINCED THAT INTENSIVE FINNISH AVOWALS OF FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION ARE NECESSARY TO REASSURE AN APPARENTLY ETERNALLY SUSPICIOUS SOVIET LEADERSHIP OF FINLAND'S TRUSTWORTHINESS AS A NONETHELESS INDEPENDENT NEIGHBOR. IN RECENT YEARS, PRAISE OF THE SOVIET UNION HAS EXTENDED BACKWARD IN TIME
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TO INCLUDE CONTROVERSIAL PERIODS OF FINNISH/SOVIET HISTORY, CAUSING SOME CRITICS TO COMPLAIN PRIVATELY (WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION) OF THE "REWRITING" OF HISTORY. KEKKONEN'S NEW EMPHASIS ON LENIN IS IN THIS VEIN.

9. SEVERAL HIGH-LEVEL EMBASSY CONTACTS HAVE DISCREETLY INDICATED THEY SHARE OUR VIEW THAT FRIENDSHIP CELEBRATIONS AND SPEECHES HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY CLOYING THIS YEAR. SOME HAVE IMPLIED THAT FINLAND MAY HAVE GONE FURTHER THAN NECESSARY. HOWEVER, THEY DO NOT QUESTION THE BASIC SOUNDNESS OF THE APPROACH; RATHER, THEY URGE WESTERN OBSERVERS NOT TO BE MISLED BY THE RHETORIC.

10. THE EMBASSY FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY IMPERATIVE OF MAINTAINING THE GOOD WILL OF THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP. IT IS CLEARLY UP TO THE FINNS TO JUDGE HOW FAR FINLAND MUST GO TO MAINTAIN THAT GOOD WILL. HOWEVER, PERIODS LIKE THE PRESENT OF EXCESSIVELY EFFUSIVE FINNISH PRAISE OF FINNISH/SOVIET RELATIONS INEVITABLY RAISE DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF OBSERVERS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONS AND ABOUT THE RISKS FINNS SEEM WILLING TO TAKE WITH THEIR OWN PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF THE HISTORY AND THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. WHILE THESE SPECIAL PERIODS OF CELEBRATIONS SHOULD BE KEPT IN PERSPECTIVE, THEY CANNOT BE TAKEN AS LIGHTLY AS THE FINNISH CAVEAT CONCERNING RHETORIC MIGHT SUGGEST.

11. NOR WILL THE POST-DECEMBER RESPITE FROM THE CURRENT ROUND OF JOINT FINNISH-SOVIET CELEBRATIONS BE A LONG ONE. APRIL 1978 MARKS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINNISH-SOVIET TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP, COMMERCE AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY APPOINTED A CITIZENS' COMMITTEE TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE CELEBRATIONS.

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Message Attributes

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